



Bloomington, Pontiac, & Joliet Electric Railway

- Background on Interurbans
- History of the BP&J
- What's left?
- Possible article

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BP&J-Interurban Background

- Inexpensive alternative to steam lines.
- Schedules with higher frequency.
- Carried mostly passengers.
- Helped in development of suburban and rural areas.
- Eventually most were killed off by paved highways which siphoned off traffic.



BP&J-Illinois Interurbans

- One of the highest density in the US for interurban lines.
- Two great systems-McKinley's Illinois Traction system in Central Illinois and Insull's Chicago-based lines.
- Gap between these two systems.
- Many smaller systems across state.



BP&J-History of the Line

- Completed from Pontiac to Odell in 1915, then to Dwight in 1906. Never made it to either end of line.
- Financed locally, eventually passed through Fisher syndicate then as part of Insull empire via Northern Illinois Public Service parent company.
- Started with 3300V GE AC power, but went to conventional DC in 1915.



BP&J-History of the Line

- Limited passenger traffic with 2-hour headway. More cars for special events.
- Freight consisted of small items except for Allen Candy.
- Highways and WWI inflation had a strong and negative impact.
- 21,000 passengers in 1924 vs. 154,000 in 1919.
- Operations ended 11/24/25.



BP&J-What's Left?

- Line was built to unusually high standards for the time.
- Bridge abutments clearly visible over area creeks just east of parallel Union Pacific/Amtrak tracks in several spots.
- Wooden bridge w/ concrete abutments still in place between Odell and Dwight.
- Right-of-way most obvious in winter.

BP&J-Possible Article in ‘First & Fastest’ magazine.

- Photos needed, especially of freight operations around Allen Candy.
- Historic maps showing line through the towns needed.
- Personal anecdotes always valuable.
- Send materials to Tom Burke